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PATENT COOPERATION TREATY

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DECLARATION OF NON-ESTABLISHMENT OF INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

(PCT Article 17(2)(a), Rules 13ter.1(c) and Rule 39)

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This International Searching Authority hereby declares, according to Article 17(2)(a), that no international search report will be established on the international application for the reasons indicated below

1. ☒ The subject matter of the international application relates to:
 - a. ☐ scientific theories.
 - b. ☐ mathematical theories
 - c. ☐ plant varieties.
 - d. ☐ animal varieties.
 - e. ☐ essentially biological processes for the production of plants and animals, other than microbiological processes and the products of such processes.
 - f. ☒ schemes, rules or methods of doing business.
 - g. ☐ schemes, rules or methods of performing purely mental acts.
 - h. ☐ schemes, rules or methods of playing games.
 - i. ☐ methods for treatment of the human body by surgery or therapy.
 - j. ☐ methods for treatment of the animal body by surgery or therapy.
 - k. ☐ diagnostic methods practised on the human or animal body.
 - l. ☐ mere presentations of information.
 - m. ☐ computer programs for which this International Searching Authority is not equipped to search prior art.

2. ☒ The failure of the following parts of the international application to comply with prescribed requirements prevents a meaningful search from being carried out:


☐ the description
☒ the claims
☐ the drawings

3. ☐ The failure of the nucleotide and/or amino acid sequence listing to comply with the standard provided for in Annex C of the Administrative Instructions prevents a meaningful search from being carried out:

☐ the written form has not been furnished or does not comply with the standard.

☐ the computer readable form has not been furnished or does not comply with the standard.

4. Further comments: SEE FURTHER INFORMATION SHEET

Name and mailing address of the International Searching Authority  European Patent Office, P.B. 5818 Patentlaan 2 NL-2280 HV Rijswijk Tel. (+31-70) 340-2040, Tx. 31 651 epo nl, Fax: (+31-70) 340-3016	Authorized officer Roger Thomas
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FURTHER INFORMATION CONTINUED FROM PCT/ISA/ 203

The claims relate to subject matter for which no search is required according to Rule 39 PCT. Given that the claims are formulated in terms of such subject matter or merely specify commonplace features relating to its technological implementation, the search examiner could not establish any technical problem which might potentially have required an inventive step to overcome. Hence it was not possible to carry out a meaningful search into the state of the art (Art. 17(2)(a)(i) and (ii) PCT; see PCT International Search Guidelines, Chapter VIII, items 1 to 3).

The applicant's attention is drawn to the fact that claims relating to inventions in respect of which no international search report has been established need not be the subject of an international preliminary examination (Rule 66.1(e) PCT). The applicant is advised that the EPO policy when acting as an International Preliminary Examining Authority is normally not to carry out a preliminary examination on matter which has not been searched. This is the case irrespective of whether or not the claims are amended following receipt of the search report or during any Chapter II procedure. If the application proceeds into the regional phase before the EPO, the applicant is reminded that a search may be carried out during examination before the EPO (see EPO Guideline C-VI, 8.5), should the problems which led to the Article 17(2) declaration be overcome.

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the goods have been delivered. It is also a preferred object of the invention to enable goods purchased by phone or online to be delivered without the consumer being present to accept them. A further object is to minimize unsuccessful trips by delivery services when delivery cannot be made to the consumer.

The foregoing objects are attained, in accordance with the present invention, by a method for the acquisition anonymously by a consumer of a good from a merchant, in which the consumer provides contact information including a package delivery address to a buying agent and the buying agent assigns an identification number unique to the buyer. The consumer selects the good for purchase from the merchant and when prompted by the merchant to provide contact and credit card payment information informs the merchant of the identification number and arranges for communication between the merchant and the buying agent. The merchant then communicates with the buying agent and provides data relating to the selected good and the identification number to the buying agent. The buying agent orders the selected good and designates the identification number as the "ship-to" address, causes a shipping agent to acquire the good from the merchant, and informs the shipping agent of the package delivery address for delivery of the good.

The initial engagement of the buying agent is best accomplished through personal contact, in which the consumer establishes an account. The consumer need not reveal his/her contact information or credit card information by phone or on the Internet. In the course of each purchase made by the buying agent, the merchant is never given any information other than the identification number and hence will have no information that will allow the good to be

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traced to the consumer or the merchant to use for subsequent contacts.

In advantageous embodiments of the method, the shipping agent notifies the buying agent when the good has been delivered to the consumer, and the buying agent charges the consumer for the good only upon being notified by the shipping agent that the good has been delivered to the consumer. Preferably, the consumer authorizes the buying agent to charge the consumer's credit card for all purchases made by the buying agent on the consumer's behalf, and the buying agent charges the consumer's credit card upon being notified by the shipping agent that the good has been delivered to the consumer. The buying agent may check the consumer's line of credit on his/her credit card before purchasing the good from the merchant.

In order to compensate the buying agent for handling the transaction, the consumer may authorize the buying agent to charge a commission to the consumer for all purchases made by the buying agent on the consumer's behalf, and the buying agent charges the commission against the consumer's credit card upon being notified by the shipping agent that the good has been delivered to the consumer.

The method of the present invention is particularly advantageous when the buying agent is also the provider of a secure storage device and of maintenance services associated with the use of the storage device by the consumer. The storage devices may be similar in general concept to those described and shown in U.S. Patent No. 5,774,053 to Porter, entitled "Storage Device for the Delivery and Pickup of Goods."

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In particular, a suitable secure storage device has a locked door that can be opened only by entering a code in a lock controller associated with the storage device. The buying agent has a controller that is in two-way communication with the lock controller and that creates a transaction code associated with the purchase of the good, sends the transaction code to the lock controller and makes the transaction code known to the shipping agent so that the shipping agent can use the transaction code to open the door of the storage device upon delivering the good. The transaction code is caused to perish when the shipping agent closes the door of the storage device after placing the good therein. Advantageously, the buying agent notifies the consumer when the good has been placed in the storage device.

As described in more detail below, and as shown in the drawings, the method of the present invention is especially useful when the consumer selects the good by online shopping on the Internet with the aid of a computer and the computer used by the consumer to select the good has a program running in the background while the consumer is selecting the good that upon command by the consumer links the merchant to a computer of the buying agent. The computer of the buying agent has a program for ordering the selected good, designating the identification number as the "ship-to" address, causing the shipping agent to acquire the good from the merchant and informing the shipping agent of the package delivery address for delivery of the good.

According to another aspect of the invention, which is useful not only when goods are purchased on behalf of a consumer by a buying agent but in all uses of an unattended secure storage device, a provider of services managing

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shipments to the storage device monitors the status of the storage device and notifies shipping agents having goods for delivery to the storage device when the storage device is full. The status of the storage device may be monitored by tracking packages delivered to the storage device and comparing data relating to delivered packages with the volume of the storage device, by sensors associated with the storage device, or visually by any person having access to the storage device. The provider of services may notify shipping agents having goods for delivery to the storage device of an alternative delivery address when the storage device is full. Also, the consumer may provide access to the storage device to a third party and direct the provider of services to notify the third party when the storage device is full. The provider of services notifies the third party when the storage device is full so that the third party can access the full storage device and remove the contents.

DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWING

For a more complete understanding of the present invention, and the advantages thereof, reference may be made to the following written description of an exemplary embodiment, taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawing.

Figs. 1A and 1B together form a flow diagram, illustrating the steps of an embodiment of the method of the present invention in which a consumer purchases goods anonymously on-line through a buying agent from a merchant for delivery by a delivery agent to an unattended, secure storage device.

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DESCRIPTION OF THE EMBODIMENT

The flow diagram is largely self-explanatory. Accordingly, the following description for the most part is limited to describing some of the terminology of the chart and some additional features of the method that are not shown in the chart.

The general purpose of the present invention is to introduce anonymity to a consumer online or catalog-shopping event. The process allows consumers (individuals and small businesses) to shop by telephone or online while keeping their contact information - name, address, telephone, E-mail, etc. - and credit card (payment) information secret. An entity (a "buying agent") acts in an agency capacity for the consumer by purchasing goods selected by the consumer for the consumer, guaranteeing or making payment to the merchant and arranging for delivery of the purchased good.

The buying agent in the example shown in the flow chart is a hypothetical company called "Smartbox." Smartbox markets secure storage devices ("bins") by lease or sale to individuals and businesses that want to provide a way for packages to be delivered to them or picked up from them without their having to be present. Smartbox's bins are strong containers that have a door that is unlocked by a code entered on a lock controller associated with the container. Examples of the ways of entering codes are diagrammed near the top of Fig. 1B. The invention allows users of Smartbox's bins to direct an item to their bins without disclosing their credit card information or their address, and Smartbox will serve as the intermediary to (a) guarantee payment, without disclosure to the merchant or shipper and (b) ensure the package is delivered to a consumer without traceability by the merchant.

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Smartbox supplies "agency software" to users of the bins, which provides an interface between the user and Smartbox's "central operations center" or "OPS." Smartbox has a computer system programmed to manage communications between Smartbox and registered user's of Smartbox's bins, between Smartbox and shipping agents, and between Smartbox and merchants from which consumers order goods using the method. Smartbox's central operations center also manages access to the bins and handles billing and payment.

As indicated in the flow chart, the consumer ("customer"), which may be an individual or a business, who wants to make an anonymous purchase from a merchant possesses a Smartbox bin, is registered with Smartbox as a user - i.e., has been assigned a unique identification number ("ID#") and has provided Smartbox with contact information and payment information. The customer also has the agency software loaded on his/her computer. The customer has granted permission to Smartbox to use his/her credit card (or other payment medium) for escrow-type transactions approved by the customer.

As shown near the top of the flow chart (Fig. 1A), the consumer visits a website and selects a product. Instead of providing the merchant with his/her contact and payment information - in the form of name, address, and credit card number - when prompted to do so, the consumer indicates his/her bin ID# and directs the merchant to digitally contact Smartbox. The merchant electronically communicates the order details, and Smartbox orders the product selected by the consumer and either pays the merchant for it with a credit card (which may be issued by Smartbox) or by prearranged credit with the merchant for payment upon delivery to the consumer. To effect shipment, Smartbox

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either (a) routes the product to its own selected depot, for later reshipment to the customer, or (b) routes the product to a distribution center of an approved shipper (e.g., UPS), without a final destination address on it. In the latter case, Smartbox will transmit information to the delivery agent about where the package is to be delivered. Using either delivery method, the merchant has no record of where the goods were sent or the identity of the ultimate recipient. Subsequently, Smartbox charges the consumer's credit card or bills the consumer directly, reimbursing itself for payment to the merchant and charging the consumer a stated premium or commission for the anonymity service.

The consumer is protected by not paying immediately for the product. The consumer pays (is charged) only when the product is actually received. The consumer will also have the advantage of dealing with Smartbox in adversarial payment disputes. The consumer will have a reliable point of contact in their shopping relationships. Instead of potentially having to contact the merchant, the deliverer, and their credit card company, the consumer uses Smartbox as the arbiter of these functions and need only deal with one entity.

The entering of the bin ID#, in conjunction with the identification of a purchase being made by agency software will trigger the creation by Smartbox's software of a unique transaction code for that transaction. If the transaction requires multiple packages, it will actually create multiple transaction codes. When those unique code(s) are created, they will be sent by the central operations center to the consumer's bin, where the code(s) will reside locally and serve as codes for opening the bin.

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Separately, those codes are electronically communicated to the shipping agent that is delivering the package to the delivery unit. When the delivery agent is ready to make the delivery, it may communicate with Smartbox to ensure that the consumer's bin is prepared to receive the delivery (see the bottom of Fig. 1A). Smartbox may also notify a shipper, based on information provided by the shipper regarding the size of the package or packages to be delivered, that the box is unable to accept the delivery. Alternatively, Smartbox may provide for notification of shippers of open transactions of bin-full or bin offline situations or of the available capacity of the bin.

In that regard, one very important advantage of the use of unattended secure storage devices is a considerable reduction in the number of unsuccessful trips by package delivery services (UPS, FedEx, etc.) to package recipients, thus making possible significant cost-savings to those services and benefiting consumers by making it unnecessary for them to travel to pick-up sites of the delivery services to fetch undelivered goods. A storage device may become full for any of several reasons, including: (a) a large volume of parcels in a single delivery has occurred; (b) several deliveries have occurred on the same day, consuming the available volume; (c) the storage device owner has not been able to empty the device (for example, due to out of town travel) and has received multiple deliveries over a several-day period. In addition to the storage device being full, it is possible for the storage device to be "offline" from Smartbox, so that the required transaction code(s) for a delivery have not been entered in the lock controller of the storage device.

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The Smartbox central operations center may alert the interested parties to an offline or a device-full status condition or provide to those parties information relating to the currently available capacity of the bin and may either direct shipping agents involved in open transactions with an offline or full bin to hold shipments or to direct deliveries to a nearby alternate location.

Recognizing that the storage device is filled may be achieved (a) by inference through data about packages that have been delivered, (b) by sensors within the bin, or (c) manually through visual observation by a delivery agent. The inferential method requires the tracking of packages delivered to the bin and a comparison of the volume of the packages with the volume of the interior cavity of the bin enclosure and also tracking each opening of the bin by the consumer, an event from which it may be inferred that the bin has been emptied of previously open deliveries. This method is inexpensive but prone to error. (Note that errors may be only mildly inconvenient if there is a convenient way to divert overflow deliveries to a nearby alternate location.)

The sensor method requires the storage device to contain detecting apparatus, such as weight sensors, proximity sensors, or electric beams to recognize and report the available capacity of the enclosure at any point in time. This method is more accurate than the inferential method but involves more points of potential electrical or mechanical failure.

The final method is visual observation. In this case, the storage device is equipped with a "Bin Full" button or other means to accept such a signal from a person able to visually inspect the available capacity of the bin. Once an

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authorized person has gained access to the storage device, that person can make the delivery and inspect the remaining capacity. If the storage device is full, the person can press the "Bin Full" button or otherwise notify Smartbox's central operations center of the status of the storage device. Alternatively, a wireless signal from a hand-held communications device, such as those used by FedEx and by UPS, may be used to indicate "bin full" status. This method is the most accurate, but it introduces greater opportunity for human error (e.g., forgetting to check the available capacity of the storage device and send a signal if it is full).

Depending on the information that Smartbox's central operations center has about the available storage device capacity, it is possible to notify interested parties about the storage devices capacity status. If the central operations center were to receive a "bin full" signal through one of the three methods described above, it would be possible to notify all interested parties. These might include:

- The storage device owner
- The storage device co-owner (e.g., a spouse, children, or roommate)
- The major delivery agents known to deliver to the storage device (e.g., FedEx, USPS, UPS)
- Any authorized local delivery agents (e.g., local dry cleaner)
- A designated agent who has access to the storage device (e.g., a neighbor)

Once these notifications are made, each constituency may adjust its plans accordingly. The storage device owner

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may make special plans to retrieve all items from the storage device. The delivery agents may reschedule any planned deliveries so they do not find the storage device in an undeliverable status.

Independently of the first two elements (storage device capacity status monitoring and notification), it is possible to manage overflow deliveries by diverting them to a pre-designated location. The most reliable solution is to send overflow items to a nearby unattended storage device delivery location. If a neighbor also is a storage device customer, then the customer and neighbor could designate each other's storage devices as overflow delivery locations. This approach would greatly increase the likelihood of any given delivery being completed on the first attempt. Another option is to route overflow deliveries to an attended location, such as a nearby retail store, the storage device owner's office, or some other attended location.

Overflow locations could be either designated in advance for all deliveries, or they might be package-specific or time-specific. In the all-deliveries version, the storage device owner might decide to designate a storage device owner in their neighborhood as the overflow delivery location unless otherwise specified. In the package-specific version, the storage device owner may decide that a specific package is so important they want it to go to a specific backup location, such as their office. Finally, a time-specific overflow designation would enable a household that is traveling for some period of time to send any overflow packages to a designated location, and this designation would end on a certain date in the future.

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In order to notify the delivery agent of the overflow delivery location, Smartbox's central operations center may make contact with the delivery agents for open delivery transactions directly, or the information may be embedded in the storage device, or both. Embedded instructions are sent to the storage device and stored locally. When a delivery agent arrives with a specific package, he/she enters the transaction code number. A display indicates the overflow location in case the storage device is full. As the delivery driver opens the storage device and notices it is full, he/she then looks at the display and notes the alternate delivery location. Alternatively, Smartbox may communicate the information to the dispatcher or driver in advance, during route planning, and thus keep the driver from making the unnecessary stop to discover that the storage device is full.

When the delivery agent comes to the bin to deliver the package, he will enter the transaction code number(s) to gain access to the unit. The code(s) might be entered by depressing alphanumeric buttons on a keypad, or might be delivered via infrared (IR) communication with the bin via a hand held device (such as a 3Com Palm Pilot™ or a universal remote control or universal portable device) or via a key fob that may be provided to delivery agents. The code(s) entered by the delivery person will be matched by the bin lock controller against transaction codes stored in the unit memory. If they match, the bin will open itself or release a door lock for opening of the door by the delivery agent.

When the bin door is closed, a message will be sent automatically from the bin to Smartbox's central operations center reporting the open/close transaction and the transaction code(s) used to gain access. Thereupon, central

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operations will send messages to both the consumer and the merchant notifying them of the date, time, and completion of the transaction. Smartbox's central database will display what package was delivered, by what delivery agent, and which merchant was the original source. There is now enough information for Smartbox to charge small fees for consummating the transaction. For example, Smartbox might charge the delivery company \$0.50 for the privilege of delivering to an unattended home delivery unit (the consumer's bin) and the merchant a fee of \$1.00 for being able to ensure a safe, secure transaction to their customer.

If the consumer is not satisfied with the product, the consumer may repack it, print a return label from Smartbox's website, place it in the bin, and press a delivery company pickup button on the agency software, which automatically triggers an unattended package pick-up by the delivery company. This enables consumers to avoid the hassle of standing in line at the post office or driving to a facility of a delivery service to drop off the package. The consumer might be charged a \$2.00 toll for that convenience. A further \$0.50 toll to delivery company and a \$0.50 toll to the merchant might be charged for once again providing them convenience, security, and notification.

A number of variations or modifications might be conceived. If an individual does not want others to know what catalogs or magazines he is receiving, a process similar to that used for goods could be applied to the delivery of catalogs/magazines to the storage device. The system may be designed to support other forms of electronic payment beyond credit cards, including e-checks and e-wallet payment systems. To manage the shipping, Smartbox may electronically communicate a label to the merchant, who will

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affix it to the package at their distribution point. This label will consist of a barcode (or similar unreadable typeface) that is merely jargon to the merchant but is understood by delivery companies to contain a shipping address.

Likewise, there are several possible uses of the anonymity features. Consumers may be able to ship undesired products or packages back to the merchant for exchange or refund using the anonymity elements of the process. Additionally, the process can apply not just to online purchases of goods but online information purchases. For example, a person may wish to subscribe to the Wall Street Journal or download research reports from a company's website without disclosing his identity. Similar anonymity features could apply where the buying agent company approves/confirms the consumer, pays the merchant directly for the purchase, directs the purchase to the consumer, and reimburses itself from the consumer's credit card with a small premium to itself.

By having the buying agent manage payments, a consumer could not directly take advantage of his/her credit card's benefits; for example, he/she might not get cash-back or frequent flyer miles. It is possible for the buying agent to develop an alternative reimbursement program. Further, the buying agent might not be able to integrate with credit card companies to provide an integrated billing statement for all of a consumer's credit card purchases. In that case, the buying agent can provide to the consumer a separate statement of purchases.

As mentioned above and shown in the flow chart, the consumer's storage device (bin) signals Smartbox's central operations center that a specific transaction has occurred,

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referencing the transaction codes used, time, name of delivery agent, and the like. It is possible that only at this point will Smartbox authorize payment to the online merchant for the product and record a debit in the account of the user. Smartbox may not front the money for the purchase unless there is sufficient available credit in the customer's credit card account at the time of the debit. Furthermore, Smartbox may not front money for purchases over some cap that it pre-specifies.

In any case, the consumer will have the product sent without needing to pay for it at the time of purchase. Furthermore, the consumer will only be charged when the product arrives at the storage device. The user is secure knowing that his money is not at risk until the product is in-hand, replicating the traditional, real-world experience of buying from a store.

To effect payment to the merchant, Smartbox has several options. It can pay the merchant by credit card at the time of the purchase or on a weekly, monthly, or quarterly basis, aggregating all charges against it and providing user statements and a lump-sum invoice at these various time points. Alternatively, Smartbox could post a charge against the merchant at the time of receipt of each individual package.

Likewise, Smartbox can, rather than charge a customer's credit card, bill a customer for his online purchase at the exact time of receipt or can defer an invoice to be combined with a time-specified billing/user statement delivered to the user at specified timeframes, weekly, monthly, or even quarterly.

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CLAIMS:

1. A method for the acquisition anonymously by a consumer of a good from a merchant, in which:

the consumer provides contact information including a package delivery address to a buying agent and the buying agent assigns an identification number unique to the buyer;

the consumer selects the good for purchase from the merchant and when prompted by the merchant to provide contact and credit card payment information informs the merchant of the identification number and arranges for communication between the merchant and the buying agent;

the merchant communicates with the buying agent and provides data relating to the selected good and the XX to the buying agent;

the buying agent orders the selected good and designates the identification number as the "ship-to" address; and

the buying agent causes a shipping agent to acquire the good from the merchant and informs the shipping agent of the package delivery address for delivery of the good.

2. The method according to claim 1, wherein the shipping agent notifies the buying agent when the good has been delivered to the consumer.

3. The method according to claim 2, wherein the buying agent charges the consumer for the good only after being notified by the shipping agent that the good has been delivered to the consumer.

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4. The method according to claim 3, wherein the buying agent accumulates charges of the consumer and bills the charges periodically.

5. The method according to claim 3, wherein the consumer authorizes the buying agent to charge a credit card of the consumer for all purchases made by the buying agent on the consumer's behalf, and the buying agent charges the consumer's credit card upon being notified by the shipping agent that the good has been delivered to the consumer.

6. The method according to claim 5, wherein the consumer authorizes the buying agent to charge a commission to the consumer for all purchases made by the buying agent on the consumer's behalf, and the buying agent charges the commission against the consumer's credit card upon being notified by the shipping agent that the good has been delivered to the consumer.

7. The method according to claim 3, wherein the consumer authorizes the buying agent to charge a credit card of the consumer for all purchases made by the buying agent on the consumer's behalf, and the buying agent checks the consumer's line of credit of the consumer's credit card before purchasing the good from the merchant.

8. The method according to claim 7, wherein the buying agent pays the merchant for the good at the time of the purchase.

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9. The method according to claim 7, wherein the buying agent accumulates charges for goods of the merchant ordered by the buying agent and pays the merchant for the goods periodically.

10. The method according to claim 1, wherein the consumer possesses a secure storage device having a locked door that can be opened only by entering a code in a lock controller, the buying agent has a controller linked to the lock controller, the buying agent creates a transaction code associated with the purchase of the good, sends the transaction code to the lock controller and makes the transaction code known to the shipping agent so that the shipping agent can use the transaction code to open the door of the storage device upon delivering the good.

11. The method according to claim 10, wherein the shipping agent communicates with the buying agent prior to attempting to deliver the good to determine whether the transaction code has been sent to the lock controller.

12. The method according to claim 10, wherein the transaction code is caused to perish when the shipping agent closes the door of the storage device after placing the good therein.

13. The method according to claim 10, wherein the buying agent notifies the consumer when the good has been placed in the storage device.

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14. The method according to claim 1, wherein the consumer selects the good by online shopping on the internet with the aid of a computer.

15. The method according to claim 14, wherein the computer used by the consumer to select the good has a program running in the background while the consumer is selecting the good that upon command by the consumer links the merchant to a computer of the buying agent, and the computer of the buying agent has a program for ordering the selected good, designating the identification number as the "ship-to" address, causing the shipping agent to acquire the good from the merchant and informing the shipping agent of the package delivery address for delivery of the good.

16. The method according to claim 15, wherein the consumer possesses a secure storage device having a locked door that can be opened only by entering a code in a lock controller, the buying agent's computer is programmed to be linked to the lock controller of the consumer's storage device based on the identification number, the buying agent's computer creates a transaction code associated with the purchase of the good, sends the transaction code to the lock controller and makes the transaction code known to the shipping agent so that the shipping agent can use the transaction code to open the door of the storage device upon delivering the good.

17. The method according to claim 16, wherein the transaction code is caused to perish when the shipping agent closes the door of the storage device after placing the good therein.

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18. The method according to claim 17, wherein the buying agent notifies the consumer when the good has been placed in the storage device.

19. The method according to claim 16, wherein the buying agent monitors the status of the consumer's storage device and notifies the shipping agent when the storage device is full or offline.

20. The method according to claim 19, wherein the buying agent notifies the shipping agent of an alternative delivery location when the consumer's storage device is full or offline.

21. A method of delivering goods to a consumer, in which the consumer possesses an unattended secure storage device, and

a provider of services managing shipments to the storage device monitors the status of the storage device and notifies shipping agents having goods for delivery to the storage device when the storage device is not available to receive goods.

22. The method according to claim 21, wherein the status of the storage device is monitored by tracking packages delivered to the storage device and comparing data relating to delivered packages with the volume of the storage device.

23. The method according to claim 21, wherein the status of the storage device is monitored by sensors associated with the storage device.

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24. The method according to claim 21, wherein the status of the storage device is monitored visually.

25. The method according to claim 21, wherein the provider of services notifies shipping agents having goods for delivery to the storage device of an alternative delivery address when the storage device is full.

26. The method according to claim 21, wherein the consumer provides access to the storage device to a third party and directs the provider of services to notify the third party when the storage device is full, and the provider of services notifies the third party when the storage device is full.

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Assumptions: 1) Customer Possesses A Smartbox Bin And Is A Registered User With A Smartbox ID#
2) Customer's Credit Card Information Is On File

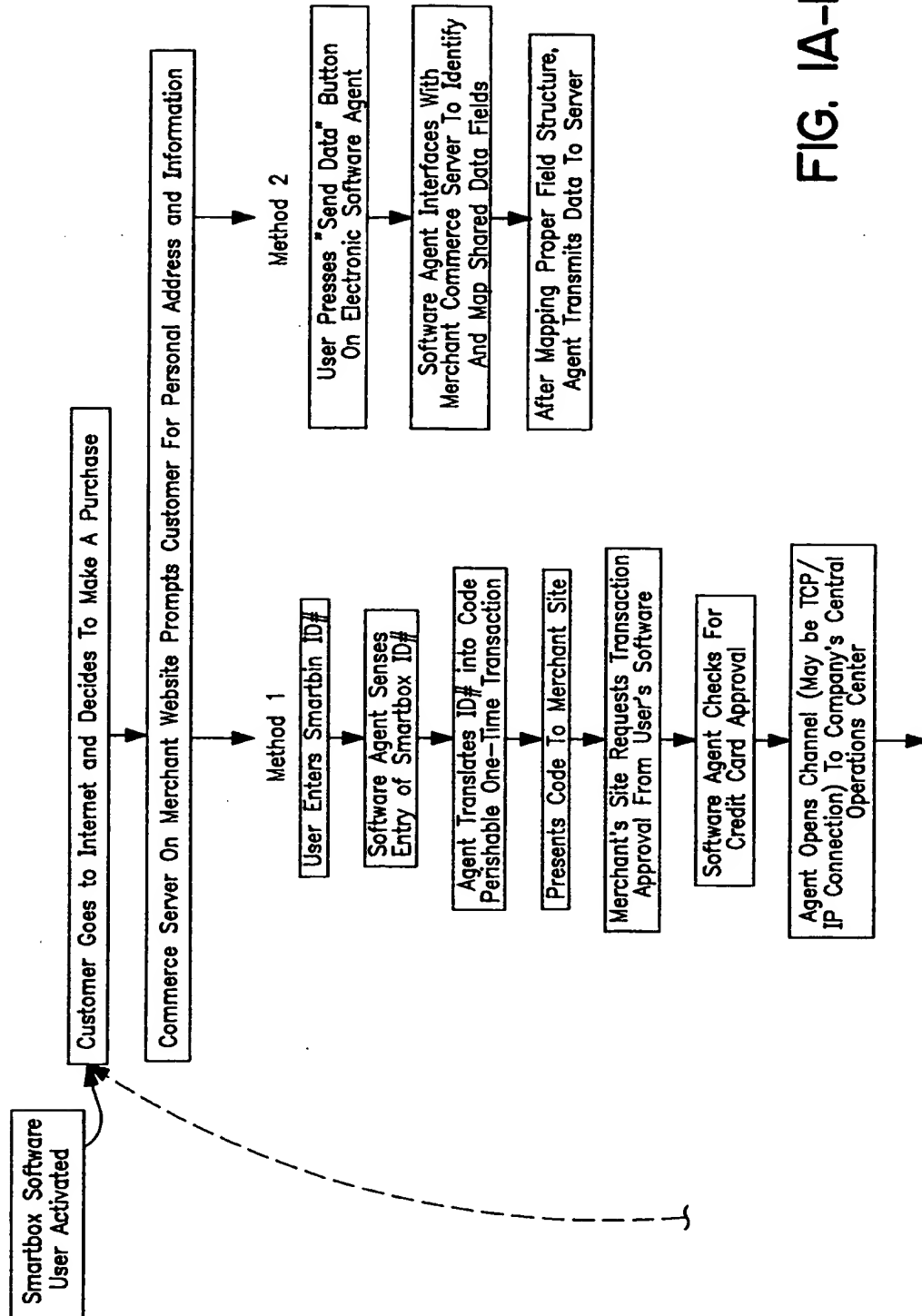


FIG. 1A-I

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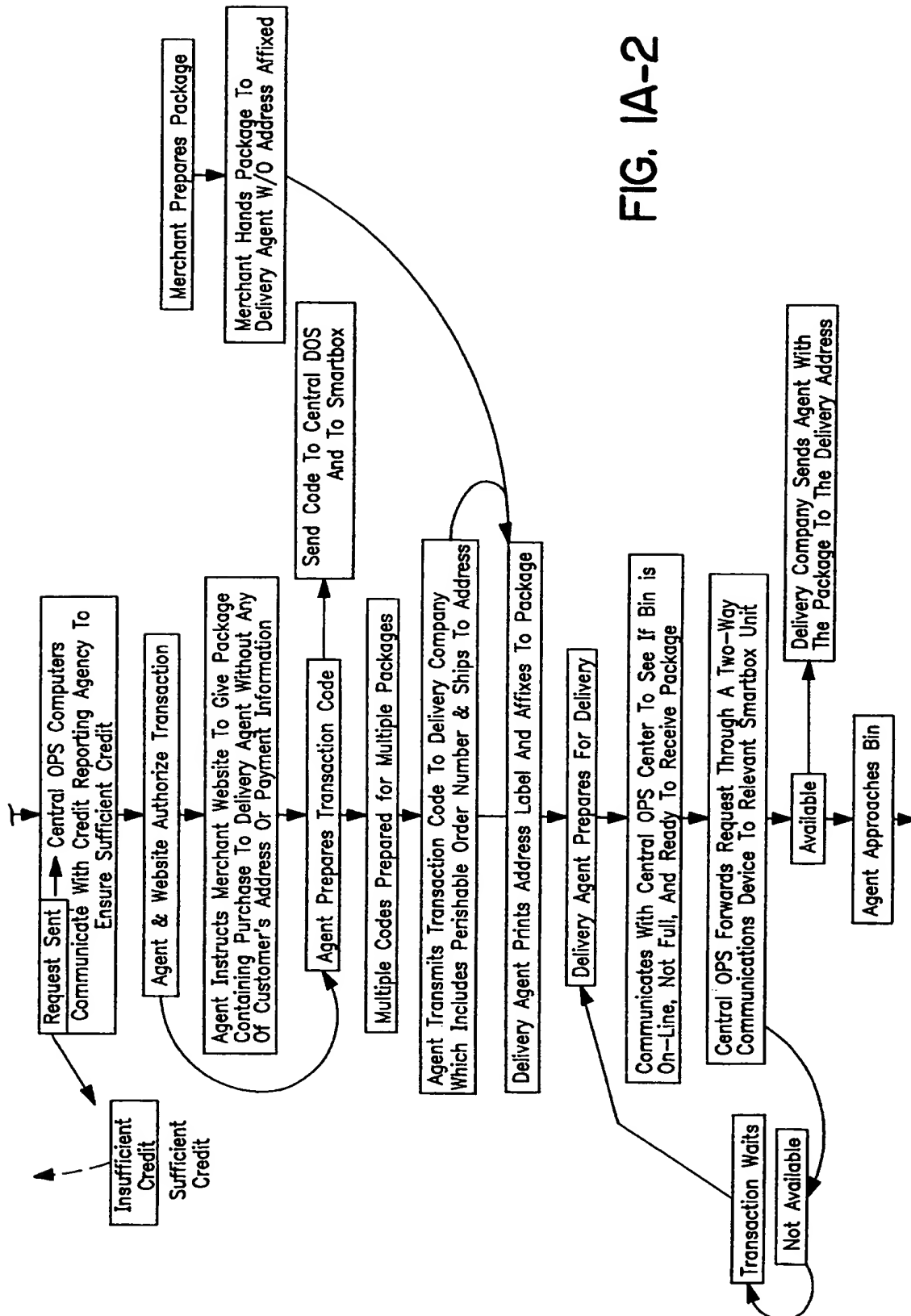


FIG. 1A-2

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FIG. 1B

